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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 06/22/07

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's daily schedule

Political agenda:

- 4) Prime Minister Abe: If there is an election defeat, I will take responsibility
- 5) Prime Minister's office wants to ease the adverse wind against the Abe government by extending the Diet, but the ruling camp fears the opposite
- 6) Opposition parties blast the ruling camp's decision to extend the Diet session
- 7) Labor law with hike in minimum wage to be shelved due to lack of time in the Diet session

Reaction to Hill visit to Pyongyang:

- 8) US seems frantic to achieve concrete results in six-party talks so sends Assistant Secretary Hill to Pyongyang
- 9) Tokyo worried that Japan's abduction issue will be left behind in Washington's rush to achieve nuclear results with Pyongyang
- 10) US promises to bring up the abduction issue with North Korea
- 11) Tokyo stresses US-Japan cooperation as Hill speeds to Pyongyang

Afghan aid:

- 12) Prime minister in meeting with Afghanistan's vice president expresses intention to continue aid
- 13) Government sending fact-finding mission to Afghanistan to seek human contribution for country's reconstruction

14) LDP league proposes tripling ODA to Africa

Defense issues:

15) Police suspect GSDF officer of having taken kickbacks in connection with Iraq dispatch equipment

16) Leakage of Aegis intelligence involves multiple legal infractions

Beef issue:

17) US-Japan talks next week on easing conditions for US beef imports

18) Four opposition parties in joint appeal come out against easing import conditions for US beef

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Labor ministry sees salary deduction of temp staff illegal

Mainichi & Tokyo Shimbun:

Diet session to be extended for 12 days; Upper House election to be held July 29

Yomiuri:

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to join French firm on US nuclear fuel recycle project bid

Nihon Keizai:

Japanese auto makers to boost exports from bases elsewhere in Asia

TOKYO 00002823 002 OF 011

Sankei:

Secret information still possessed by many MSDF personnel

SIPDIS

Akahata:

Junior Chamber International Japan declines consignment contract of "Yasukuni DVD"

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) With three education-related laws: Education ministry must not force uniform school education

(2) Is revised Iraq Special Measures Law a law to support Bush administration?

Mainichi:

(1) Extension of Diet session not a good strategy for the Upper House election

(2) Extension of SDF mission for Iraq: Time to think about an exit strategy

Yomiuri:

(1) Extension of ASDF mission: Need for continued support for Iraq reconstruction

(2) Cool, prudent operation of revised criminal procedure law required

Nihon Keizai (Nikkei):

(1) A social security numbering system should be created

(2) Prime Minister Abe should seek the judgment of the people

Sankei:

(1) We support the Diet extension decision that goes with responsibility

(2) Hill's visit to North Korea: Abduction issue must not be left behind

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Tokyo spa blast: Need for safety measures for blind spot in

urban areas

(2) Highway tolls should be drastically reduced

Akahata:

Extension of Diet session: We cannot allow the arrogant Abe cabinet to do as it pleases

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, June 21

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 22, 2007

07:59

Had breakfast with Nippon Keidanren Chairman Mitarai and Tokyo University Professor Motoshige Ito at a Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka restaurant.

09:41

Arrived at the Kantei.

10:54

TOKYO 00002823 003 OF 011

Met with MLIT Minister Fuyushiba.

11:48

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matoba.

14:01

Held talks with New Komeito Head Ota. Secretary General Nakagawa, New Komeito Secretary General Kitagawa and Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki were present. Then met with Agriculture Minister Akagi.

15:01

Attended a meeting of the National Association of Credit Banks held at the Keidanren Hall in Otemachi.

15:38

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Suzuki at the Kantei, followed by Vice Foreign Minister Yachi.

16:33

Met with Nakagawa.

17:04

Central Disaster Prevention Council meeting. Then met with Afghan Vice President Khalili.

19:00 Returned to the official residence.

4) Prime minister: I will take responsibility if LDP is defeated in Upper House election

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)  
June 22, 2007

In responding to questions from reporters at his official residence last night, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said about the decision to extend the current Diet session: "I decided it from the viewpoint of what should be done for the people." He then admitted that if (the Liberal Democratic Party) is defeated in the Upper House election, the issue of responsibility for the prime minister, who instructed senior LDP members to extend the session, will crop up. He said: "The prime minister has a responsibility at all times, every day."

The prime minister criticized LDP members who are against extending the Diet session, remarking: "My mission is to ponder what the government should do for the sake of the people and not to consider how technically we should win the election. Those who do not take such a view should resign."

5) Ruling camp's concern grows over Diet extension, although Kantei feels relieved

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
June 22, 2007

The House of Representatives will today decide to extend the current Diet session. By extending the Diet session, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hopes to assuage to a certain extent public criticism of the pension premium-payment fiasco by delaying the election by a week. However, many lawmakers in the ruling parties are now growing more concerned that there could be just the opposite effect and the decision to extend might backfire.

TOKYO 00002823 004 OF 011

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki explained the purpose of the extension at a press conference yesterday: "We will definitely be able to get the pension and national civil service bills through the Diet."

By respectively enacting the bills removing the five-year statute of limitations on pension claims and amending the National Civil Service Law during the ongoing session, the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) hopes that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will be able to demonstrate his achievements to the public. In addition, the Kantei side wishes to obtain public understanding for the government's efforts by appointing a committee on the pension record fiasco and a third-party panel on pension payments to study the issue.

However, concern was raised in meetings yesterday of factions in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Foreign Minister Taro Aso stated: "I cannot presume how the extension will turn out." Former Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki said: "There will be positive and negative effects."

LDP Upper House Caucus Policy Research Council Chairman Yoichi Masuzoe, who will run in the upcoming July election for another term, blasted the government's decision to extend the session:

"The extension will do no good and a lot of harm. We will be criticized for extending the session to hide the pension fiasco. Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) will pursue the issue in the extended session and as a result, cabinet support rating will plunge. The prime minister is now in over his head."

An LDP Election Strategy Headquarters member took this view: "I think cabinet support rates will not increased, even though the voting date is delayed. Especially winning women's support that the cabinet has now lost will be difficult."

6) Opposition camp blasts extension of the Diet, calling it the "ruling camp's high-handedness"; Vows to further pursue the pension issue

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpt)  
June 22, 2007

The opposition parties have strongly criticized the decision to extend the current Diet session, using such terms as "the high-handedness of the government and ruling parties." Their Diet strategy now will be to continue to criticize such, and to pursue the government on the pension issue even more, hoping to build more voter support in the upcoming Upper House election.

7) Labor-related legislation likely to be carried over to next session: LDP leadership in Upper House judges insufficient time

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
June 22, 2007

There has appeared a strong possibility of three labor-related bills, including an amendment to the Minimum Wage Law, being carried over to the next session. Following the decision to extend the current Diet session by 12 days, moves to seek passage of those bills had emerged in the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei) and the ruling camp. However, since the LDP leadership in the Upper House

was negative toward the idea, the decision was made at a meeting yesterday to put off enactment of the three bills during the current session.

The Lower House Health, Labor and Welfare Committee had been discussing a bill amending the Labor Standard Law to raise the premium rate for allowances for overtime work, an amendment to the Minimum Wage Law aimed at raising the minimum wage and a labor contract bill to set new employment rules.

The Kantei asked the ruling camp to pass those bills during the current session in order to appeal the administration's stance of tackling income disparities with the Upper House election just ahead. The ruling camp had indicated readiness to adopt the bills and send them to the Upper House with progress in deliberations on a set of bills to reform the Social Insurance Agency (SIA) in the Upper House taken into account. They had calculated that since the Japanese Trade Union Confederation wants to see the Minimum Wage Law amended, the bill would serve as a material to shake the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto).

However, the LDP leadership in the Upper House has judged that the 12-day extension of the Diet session would not guarantee sufficient time for deliberations on the three bills. Tetsuro Yano, chairman of the Upper House Diet Policy Committee of the LDP, during a meeting of the chairmen of the Policy Committees of the ruling parties in both Diet chambers yesterday morning categorically said, "The Upper House will not be able to pass those bills even at the risk of our lives."

8) Hill visits North Korea possibly in hope of concrete results;  
Six-party foreign ministerial to produce statement

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
June 22, 2007

Takashi Arimoto, Washington

US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, chief US delegate to the six-party talks, visited North Korea on June 21 to ensure concrete results toward North Korea's nuclear dismantlement by holding a first six-party foreign ministerial in August to produce a joint statement. A six-party source, however, described Hill's visit before the North shuts down and seals its nuclear facilities rather than after implementing those initial steps as a manifestation of "panic." The North might take the initiative in future talks.

Hill visited North Korea at the request of Pyongyang, according to the six-party talks. A direct dialogue with the North, however, reportedly realized based on an instruction by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The source also said: "Both Secretary Rice and Assistant Secretary Hill regard the North as not easily trustworthy. They also think that if an agreement is reached in the foreign ministerial, the North would follow it."

In the wake of the six-party agreement in February, Hill had intended to hold a foreign ministerial as early as April. But his plan fell through because of a substantial delay in transferring North Korea's frozen funds at Banco Delta Asia in Macao. Further, Washington's decision to return the North Korean funds in full under Hill's leadership has drawn strong criticism within the United States.

TOKYO 00002823 006.2 OF 011

President Bush has also reportedly expressed his displeasure with the lack of progress on the six-party talks despite the US concessions. These factors can explain Hill's need to get something done quickly.

9) Japan fears abduction issue being left behind

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)

June 22, 2007

US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill's visit to North Korea has drawn mixed reactions from the Japanese government. A senior Foreign Ministry official expressed hope, saying, "It's a good opportunity to get Japan's position on the abduction issue and other matters across." At the same time, the government is concerned that US-North Korea talks on the nuclear issue would move forward while leaving the abduction issue behind.

After his meeting on June 20 with Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi, Hill told reporters that he would stay in Japan until the 21st, saying, "I have someone that I want to see."

But there is no evidence that he later met a key Japanese official. Instead, he watched a professional baseball game at a ballpark on the night of June 20. He apparently needed to stay longer in Japan for his visit to North Korea.

The visit to North Korea did not crop up in Hill's talks with Foreign Ministry officials on June 19-20, according to ministry officials. Foreign Minister Taro Aso officially learned of the visit in a telephone call from US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at 9:00 a.m. June 21. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe learned of it at 6:00 a.m. that day.

According to an informed source, when Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau chief Kenichiro Sasae held a meeting with Hill on June 19, Sasae asked Hill to resume the six-party talks after the July Upper House election, but Hill rejected it.

"Mr. Hill seemed reluctant to refer to the abduction issue," a Foreign Ministry official said. Another official took this view: "With the Upper House election drawing close, the Kantei (Prime Minister's Official) is nervous about (how Hill's North Korea visit will turn out)."

10) Government asks US to raise abduction issue

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
June 22, 2007

US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill's visit to North Korea has drawn mixed reactions from the Japanese government, with some expressing hopes for progress on the six-party talks and some others concerned about the abduction issue being left behind.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last night highlighted his plan to work in close cooperation with the United States, saying: "The abduction issue is something that Japan cannot compromise on. Japan will work closely with the United States." He also said about the denuclearization of North Korea: "We must watch closely whether or not the North will implement the initial steps."

TOKYO 00002823 007.2 OF 011

Foreign Minister Taro Aso had a telephone conversation with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday morning ahead of

SIPDIS

Hill's departure for North Korea. Aso asked Rice to tell Pyongyang that (1) Japan is ready to normalize relations with North Korea in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, and (2) Tokyo expects Pyongyang to fully address Japan-North Korea relations, including the abduction issue. In response, Rice said: "I assure you that Mr. Hill will raise the question of Japan-North Korea relations."

Aso's request on the abduction issue comes from concern that the nuclear issue would draw undivided international attention following the direct US-North Korea talks and the abduction issue would be put on the back burner as a result.

Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi also underlined the importance of the abduction issue in his meeting with Hill on June 20.

11) Government stresses Japan-US cooperation on North Korea policy, but alarmed by US' conciliatory stance

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Excerpt)  
June 22, 2007

The Japanese government has a complicated view toward the visit to Pyongyang by US Assistant Secretary of State Hill. On the one hand, it is hoping for progress on the nuclear issue, but it also is alarmed that the US is easing into a conciliatory stance toward North Korea. For Japan, the worst case scenario would be the US and North Korea prioritizing their entering into a dialogue, leaving the abduction issue behind. Although Japan-US cooperation is being stressed, as seen in Foreign Minister Aso and Secretary of State Rice urging Pyongyang to seriously deal with the abduction issue, the truth is that Tokyo cannot conceal its anxiety about the Hill visit.

12) Abe explains plan about continued assistance for Afghanistan in meeting with Afghan vice president

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)  
June 22, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with visiting Afghan Vice President Halili at his official residence yesterday and explained Japan's plan to continue the fueling mission by Maritime Self-Defense Force for the United States military and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) force in the Indian Ocean, as well as Afghan reconstruction assistance including grant aid.

Prior to the meeting with the prime minister, Halili attended an international conference for stabilizing Afghanistan held in Tokyo. In the conference, participants agreed to step up the program for support of the integrated disbandment of illegal armed groups (DIAG) initiative. Foreign Minister Taro Aso pointed out the necessity for strengthened police force, remarking: "By disbanding illegal armed groups, it will become possible to establish the rule of the law across the nation."

13) Government to dispatch fact-finding team to Afghanistan after Upper House election to seek ways to provide human contribution for

TOKYO 00002823 008.2 OF 011

reconstruction

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)  
June 22, 2007

The government decided yesterday to dispatch a fact-finding team to Afghanistan this summer to seek specific measures to help reconstruct the nation. Reflecting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's eagerness to offer personnel contribution to stabilize Afghanistan, officials of the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry will visit Kabul. Based on the information on the local security situation gathered from officials of the Afghan government, the United States military, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the two ministries will study the possibility of dispatch of Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops or civilian police officers.

In Afghanistan, the security situation is deteriorating as terrorist activities by the Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group, have intensified. On June 17, terrorist explosions hurt two Japanese nationals in Kabul. Since Abe promised in a NATO meeting in January that Japan would increase support for the NATO's provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) that facilitate reconstruction in Afghanistan's provinces, expectations have been running high for Japan to provide a human contribution.

In a press conference in Heiligendamm, Germany, in early June, Prime Minister Abe emphasized: "Japan must extend personnel contribution proactively," adding: "It is necessary for Japan, as the chair of the G-8 summit next year, to carry out its responsibility in dealing with international challenges."

Reflecting Abe's determination, the government has decided to send a fact-find team to Afghanistan to learn local needs and security situation after the House of Councillors election set for late July. The Japanese government has offered grant aid, but it has now judged it necessary to also offer human contribution.

For SDF dispatch, since the special antiterrorism law governing SDF support for the US military and the NATO force in Afghanistan is not premised on reconstruction assistance, amendments are necessary. The Defense Ministry has also a strong desire to have the Maritime Self-Defense Force's supply vessels and escort ships continue their fueling mission for the US military in the Indian Ocean.

Based on a report by the team, the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry intend to cautiously map out personnel contribution measures, but there is a possibility that only civilians, such as police officers or representatives of non-government organizations (NGO), will be dispatched to Afghanistan.

14) LDP lawmakers league proposes tripling ODA to Africa

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
June 22, 2007

The Japan-African Union (AU) Parliamentarian Friendship League, consisting of members of the AU and LDP lawmakers and chaired by former Prime Minister Mori, yesterday drafted a set of aid measures aimed at tripling official development assistance (ODA) to Africa by 2013. The government plans to increase ODA to Africa to approximately 1.7 billion dollars by fiscal 2007. The league noted that it wanted to see Japan's aid to Africa increase to the world's

TOKYO 00002823 009.2 OF 011

highest level through positive use of yen loans in ODA to that continent.

15) Police to quiz GSDF officer over money scandal

TOKYO (Page 1) (Abridged)  
June 22, 2007

Police will question a Ground Self-Defense Force colonel in his 40s and a Tokyo-based trading house's executives today on a charge of bribery, suspecting that they have given and received money over the Defense Ministry's contracts to purchase logistic equipment.

According to the 2nd Investigation Division of Tokyo's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and other sources, the colonel is mainly in charge of equipment procurement. This GSDF officer is suspected of having received cash amounting to several hundred thousand yen in return for giving special preference to the trading company over repair and other contracts.

The trading company, which is headquartered in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward, has delivered a large number of equipment items used mainly in the rear, including outdoor cookers for GSDF members on the front. Outdoor cookware was used by GSDF troops sent to Iraq in 2004. In addition, the company has also delivered open-air bath units, which were provided to people living in localities hit by the 1995 Osaka-Kobe earthquake or other disasters. Among other items delivered to the Defense Agency, there were rice-cooking pots and helmets. There were also cupboards and desks used at GSDF garrisons.

According to the Ground Staff Office's public relations division at the Defense Ministry, there are two types of outdoor cookware. One is a trailer type, which is priced at about 8 million yen per unit. The other is a portable type for about 1.5 million yen per unit. A company in Hamamatsu City manufactures these cookers. The trading company has industrial property rights pertaining to these products, so it delivered these products on a private contract basis with other companies precluded.

16) Many in MSDF violate regulations, possess classified info

SANKEI (Top play) (Abridged)



June 22, 2007

In connection with the recent case of information leakage, including pivotal data about Aegis-equipped vessels, the Maritime Self-Defense Force has discovered that MSDF personnel at the MSDF 1st Service School—which is located in Etajima City, Hiroshima Prefecture, and was involved in the incident of information leakage—had violated regulations and possessed classified information in large quantities even after the incident was brought to light, sources revealed yesterday. As seen from this fact, the MSDF was extremely careless about information security. In addition to the pivotal data about Aegis ships, there was important data about other weapons and their performance. Moreover, there was even information about fleet operations. Such information was saved on floppy disks and other storage media, which were left in desk drawers, according to the sources. The incident this time shows a serious situation in which the MSDF has still failed to carry out information control in a thoroughgoing way.

TOKYO 00002823 010.2 OF 011

In the wake of the information leak, the MSDF conducted special inspections on and after May 20, with a setup of about 60 inspectors, including those from the Maritime Staff Office, to inspect educational units and other MSDF elements across the nation.

At the 1st Service School, inspectors rechecked the hard drives of computers used by instructors and MSDF trainees there. Inspectors also rechecked other storage media, such as USB memory cards and floppy disks. As a result, some of those MSDF trainees there were found to have had barred data, according to an MSDF officer.

Aegis data falls under the category of "defense secret" or "tokubetsu boei himitsu," which is the highest level of confidentiality. In addition, those under the category of

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"classified" or "hi" include the performance of sonar systems, torpedoes, and various other weapons, as well as antisubmarine operations. At the 1st Service School, however, inspectors discovered such critical information, data, and "handle-with-care" documents.

17) Japan, US to launch talks to ease US beef import conditions as early as next week

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 22, 2007

It is almost certain that Japan and the US will launch talks to ease Japan's US beef import conditions. Washington on June 22 made a request to hold the first round of such talks in Tokyo within next week. Tokyo is expected to accept the request shortly.

Vice Agriculture Minister Yoshio Kobayashi during a regular news briefing yesterday noted, "We received a request from the US government to hold a technical meeting in Tokyo to revise Japan's US beef import conditions."

During the planned bilateral meeting, quarantine experts from both countries will first determine the need to ease Japan's beef import conditions, based on scientific grounds, followed by talks between senior officials of both governments on how the import conditions should be revised.

The government will then ask the Food Safety Commission, an independent organization, to compile a report based on the outcome of the talks. The likelihood is that import conditions will be eased within the year at the earliest.

Japan limits US beef eligible for export to Japan to cattle up to 20 months in age and requires the removal of specified risk materials (SRM). The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), which sets livestock safety standards, has recognized the US as a country with a controlled BSE risk and allowed it to export beef from cattle aged

up to 30 months even without removing SRM. Following the recognition, the US has called on Japan to extensively ease its import conditions. The upcoming bilateral talks will likely focus on easing the cattle age criterion to allow imports of beef from cattle aged 30 months or younger.

18) Four opposition parties in joint rally oppose incremental easing of restrictions on US beef imports

TOKYO 00002823 011.2 OF 011

AKAHATA (Page 15) (Excerpt)  
June 22, 2007

Responding to the Abe Cabinet's entering into bilateral talks with the United States on easing import conditions on US beef, four opposition parties - Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), Japanese Communist Party (JCP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the Peoples New Party (PNP) - jointly held a rally last night at the Second Diet Members' Hall in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward to oppose incremental easing of import restrictions. Several hundred citizens also attended, including lawmakers, consumer groups, and representatives of domestic beef producers. The adopted a position opposed to easing the age condition and the abolishment of subsidies that allow blanket inspections of domestic cows for BSE. The group concluded that compared to Japan, the safety of American beef was extremely low.

DONOVAN